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# Citizens' Guide

to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission 23 1995

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**Basics on the Bay Area's  
Transportation  
Planning, Financing and  
Coordinating Agency**

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*May 1995*





# Table of Contents

## Foreword: Do You Speak "Transportationese?" 2

## Bay Area Transportation Basics 4

**Map:** Major Features of the Bay Area  
Transportation Network 5

## The ABCs of MTC 6

What is MTC? 6

What does MTC do? 6

How does MTC work with Caltrans, transit  
operators or local government agencies? 7

How are commissioners selected? 8

Getting Involved in MTC Activities 8

## Planning for the Future 9

MTC's Regional Transportation Plan 9

Corridor Studies and Other Key  
Planning Projects 9

**Table:** Fast Facts From the 1990 Census 10

## The Funding Pipeline 11

Ongoing Operations and Maintenance 11

**Chart:** Projected Bay Area Transportation  
Revenues 12

Capital Investments 12

Where does the funding come from? 13

**Chart:** Projected Bay Area Transportation  
Expenditures 13

How do transportation projects  
get funded? 13

**Chart:** Major Transportation Funding  
Sources 14

**Chart:** How a Project Gets Funded 16

MTC's Regional Rail Agreement  
(Resolution 1876) 17

**Map:** Bay Area Rail Extensions 17

## Keep It Moving! 18

Operating the Bay Area  
Transportation Network 18

## Plugging Into the Process: MTC's Public Involvement Activities 20

MTC Works Through  
Standing Committees 20

Citizen Advisory Committees Provide  
Important Feedback 21

Public Information Services 21

Library Services 22

**Map:** Visiting MTC Offices 22

Citizens' Guide to "Transportationese" 23

## Credits 29

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## Do You Speak “Transportationese”?

Which comes first — the TIP or the STIP? Any way to curb those ubiquitous SOVs? Are your multi-

modal priorities in order? And who can you call to flex your NHS, STP and CMAQ?



Does the gobbledygook above strike a responsive chord? If not, you're in good company. Outside of transportation circles, these acronyms and phrases mean little. For better or worse, the transportation arena has a language and a process all its own. Just as getting from point 'a' to point 'b' in the San Francisco Bay Area is often easier said than done, navigating your way through the complex web of transportation plans and funding programs can likewise be a challenge.



Is it worth the effort to become versed in the mobility business? More and more Bay Area citizens have found the answer to be “yes.” Whether motivated by a wish to contain ever-expanding rush hours, a quest to fill seemingly cavernous potholes or a desire for radically different transportation systems, all seek a say in how the billions of dollars in public monies are spent annually on the region's extensive network of highways, public transit systems, bicycle and pedestrian routes, local roads, airports and seaports.



The San Francisco Bay

Area's Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has designed this guide to serve as a primer on MTC's roles and responsibilities for the region's interested citizens and local policy-makers, and to provide basic information on the Bay Area's transportation network. We've done our best to explain things in plain language. (If, however, we should lapse into "transportationese," a glossary of acronyms and terms is included at the end.)



Our aim is to encourage informed and productive citizen participation in MTC's activities. No single organization has a monopoly on good ideas — they often germinate through an open exchange of information and viewpoints. And given increasing demands on limited public funds, transportation programs and projects cannot proceed without the public acceptance and support that come through an open, inclusive process. It is in this spirit that MTC offers the following pages.



# Bay Area Transportation Basics

## The People

With a population of more than 6 million, the San Francisco Bay Area is the fifth-largest metropolitan area in the nation. By the year 2010, the regional population is expected to climb to 7.5 million, while the number of jobs regionwide will swell from 3 million to nearly 4 million.

## The Setting

The San Francisco Bay Area encompasses the nine counties that touch San Francisco Bay: Alameda and Contra Costa in the East Bay; Marin, Napa, Solano and Sonoma in the North Bay; San Francisco and San Mateo on the Peninsula/West Bay; and Santa Clara County — the region's most populous county — in the South Bay. Home to 100 municipalities, the region has a land mass of 7,179 square miles.

## The Network

The Bay Area's transportation network includes 1,400 miles of state highways, 100 miles of carpool lanes, eight toll bridges, 18,000 miles of local streets and roads, over 7,000 miles of transit routes (including 331 miles of rail transit), six public ports, six commuter ferry lines, five commercial airports, and two extensive bicycle and

pedestrian trails linking all nine counties — the Bay Trail hugging San Francisco Bay and the Ridge Trail linking the region's higher ground (when completed, these trails together will encompass some 800 miles).

## The Mass Transit System

More than two dozen public transit operators offer service in the region, including BART, the Peninsula's CalTrain, the East Bay's AC Transit and County Connection, the North Bay's Golden Gate Transit, San Mateo County's SamTrans, San Francisco's Muni, and the South Bay's Santa Clara County Transit District. Rounding out the list are a number of smaller operators sprinkled throughout the region. Together, the Bay Area's transit services carry an average weekday ridership of over 1.5 million and provide more than 9 million hours of service annually.

## The Automobile

In 1990, the number of cars owned regionwide totaled nearly 4 million — about 1.76 cars per household. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, Santa Clara County ranked first in the Bay Area in the share — 78 percent — of commuters driving alone to work.





# Major Features of the Bay Area Transportation Network

**Legend:**

- Highway
- Rail: CalTrain and Amtrak
- Rail: BART
- Light Rail: Santa Clara County
- Light Rail: SF Muni
- Bus Transit Service Area
- Major Airport
- Major Seaport
- Ferry Service

### Ferry Service

Densely populated San Francisco, with its extensive public transit network, had the lowest portion of “drive-alone” work trips, at 38 percent.

### The Commute

Work trips account for roughly one-quarter of all travel in the region. According to the census, on an average work day, 68 percent of the region’s commuters travel alone by auto, 13 percent by carpool or van-pool with two or more persons, and 10 percent by public transit. Four percent walk, 4 percent work at home, 1 percent ride a bicycle, and 1 percent travel by other means.

### The Budget

On average, some \$2.2 billion of public funds in today’s dollars will be spent annually on transportation in the Bay Area over the next 20 years. Of this, roughly \$1 billion will go to mass transit operations; approximately \$469 million will be devoted to operating and maintaining state highways, local streets and roads, and the region’s seven state-owned toll bridges; and some \$764 million will go to new projects to improve or expand mass transit, highways and local streets.

# The ABCs of MTC

## What is MTC?

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission, or MTC for short, was created by the California Legislature in 1970 to plan the transportation network for the nine Bay Area counties. Directed by a policy board of 19 commissioners, MTC has a staff of 106 and an annual operating budget of \$14 million, funded from local, regional, state and federal transportation monies. Offices are located in the Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter in Oakland, at 101 Eighth Street, adjacent to the Lake Merritt BART station (see map, page 22).

## What does MTC do?

Ask that question of the average person on the street and chances are slim that you’ll get a correct answer. While MTC is not a household name, it does a lot of things that have an impact on how Bay Area residents get around. Here are some examples:

**MTC plans** – Any new transportation project in the region must be included in MTC’s *Regional Transportation Plan* before it can move forward. MTC updates this 20-year plan every two years to guide regional transportation investments. In addition to preparing a long-range plan, MTC looks at specific travel routes, weighs the relative merits of various travel options



(new rail or roads, or upgrades to what is already in place), then decides on the needed improvements.

**MTC funds** – The Commission votes to allocate and keeps accurate accounting of nearly \$1 billion every year in funding to mass transit, local streets and roads, highways, freight facilities and bicycle and pedestrian routes in the region.

**MTC advocates** – Whether testifying in Washington or Sacramento to garner funds for a Bay Area rail project, or making a case for a change in policy to cut red tape, MTC promotes Bay Area interests to the state and federal governments. As the regional transportation agency representing nine Bay Area counties, MTC is able to broker agreements between numerous local agencies. By presenting a unified front, the region is in a better position to win support from the state and the feds for regional priorities.

**MTC troubleshoots** – MTC devotes a lot of energy to keeping the region's transportation network humming along. For example, to help cities and counties maintain local streets and roads in good condition, MTC developed a computerized system to determine the best time to resurface streets at the lowest cost. To fill in a major gap in the region's public transit network, MTC coordinated the efforts of several transit operators to launch bus service across the

Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, and from Daly City BART to the San Francisco International Airport. In support of its allocation decisions, MTC scrutinizes transit operators' budgets and evaluates their service and overall performance.

### How does MTC work with Caltrans, transit operators or local government agencies?

As just one of many players involved in Bay Area transportation, MTC has worked to bring together other agencies and to involve them in MTC's efforts to make the existing transportation network operate more efficiently. In January of 1992, MTC formed The Bay Area Partnership, with a membership that includes not only Caltrans (the California Department of Transportation) and local



transit operators, but representatives from county-level congestion management agencies (CMAs), airports and seaports, as well as other regional, state and federal transportation and environmental-protection agencies.

By working together, the Partnership has been able to launch a number of relatively low-cost, multijurisdictional projects designed to stretch more capacity out of the roadways, make the transit system more user-friendly, or streamline the planning process (see pages 18–19 for a sampling).

### **How are commissioners selected?**

MTC's 19-member panel — 16 of them voting members — is selected as follows. Fourteen voting members are appointed directly by local elected officials. In each of the more populous counties — Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara — two commissioners are appointed, one by the county's council of mayors and councilmembers (in San Francisco, by the mayor) and one by the county board of supervisors. In each of the less populous counties — Marin, Napa, Solano and Sonoma — the county's council of mayors and councilmembers nominates up to three candidates to the board of supervisors, which selects one commissioner. Because of this system, most commissioners are local elected officials.

Aside from the local appointments, two voting MTC members represent regional agencies: the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). In addition, there are three nonvoting members. They represent the state's Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, as well as the federal Housing and Urban Development Department and the United States Department of Transportation.

The Commission meets once a month, on the fourth Wednesday. All commissioners serve four-year terms and may be reappointed. The chair and vice chair, elected by voting members of MTC, serve two-year terms.

### **Getting Involved in MTC Activities**

The following pages offer an overview of MTC's role in planning, financing and coordinating Bay Area transportation. Beginning on page 20 is a section entitled, "Plugging into the Process: MTC's Public Involvement Activities," which lists various ways that citizens can participate in or track MTC actions.





# Planning for The Future

## MTC's *Regional Transportation Plan*

One of MTC's most important functions is preparation of a *Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP) for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. The RTP is a blueprint to guide the region's transportation development for a 20-year period. Updated every two years to reflect changing conditions and new planning priorities, it is based on projections of growth and travel demand coupled with financial assumptions.

New federal directives embodied in the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and 1990 amendments to the federal Clean Air Act (CAA) require that the RTP include only those projects that the region can afford. Further, the projects included, taken as a whole, must not worsen air quality.

The RTP process includes extensive public consultation and outreach to various agencies and citizens. This outreach is critical, since no transportation project in the region can move forward unless it is found to be consistent with regional goals, and thus included in the RTP. The RTP currently in effect was adopted in June 1994. It will be updated in 1996.

## Corridor Studies and Other Key Planning Projects

Aside from long-range planning, MTC studies various travel corridors to determine the best way to navigate a particular route given factors such as time and money, and land-use, environmental and community goals. Known as "Major Investment Studies," these corridor-level studies reflect new federal requirements that emphasize public participation and consideration of alternative travel options early in the planning process, as well as better connections between transportation planning and environmental review.

Examples of recent or pending corridor studies include:

- CalTrain extension to downtown San Francisco;
- Fremont-San Jose rail connection;
- Interstate 80 in Alameda, Contra Costa and Solano counties;
- Interstate 580/Altamont Pass in Alameda and San Joaquin counties.

MTC planners also track data from the U.S. Census to study the comings and goings of Bay Area commuters. The census, conducted once a decade, gives transportation planners a glimpse into the Bay Area workforce's commuting habits. The information, along with other travel surveys from a variety of sources, is used to forecast travel demand, plan transit routes, and prepare local general plans, among other things. (See the table on page 10 for some findings from the 1990 U.S. Census.)

# Fast Facts From the 1990 U.S. Census:

	1980	1990	Percent Change
<b>Bay Area Population</b>			
	5 million	6 million	+16%
<b>Number of Bay Area Workers</b>			
	2.5 million	3 million	+25%
<b>How Bay Area Workers Get to Their Jobs</b>			
Drive Alone	62.8%	68.2%	+ 9%
Carpool	16.3%	13.0%	- 20%
Ride Transit	11.4%	9.5%	- 17%
Walk	4.4%	3.6%	- 18%
Work at Home	1.9%	3.4%	+ 79%
Other	3.1%	2.3%	- 26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	
<b>Average Travel Time to Work (in minutes)</b>			
	24.3	25.6	+ 5%
<b>Average Commute Vehicle Occupancy Rate</b>			
	1.132	1.097	- 3%
<b>Automobile Fuel Costs per Mile, Adjusted for Inflation</b>			
	9.74¢	5.36¢	- 45%
<b>Job Growth in Bay Area Suburbs Versus Central Cities</b>			
Central Cities	963,700	1,020,900	+ 6%
Suburbs	1,572,400	2,027,500	+29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,536,100</b>	<b>3,048,400</b>	<b>+20%</b>



# The Funding Pipeline

Imagine if you can a pipeline flowing from Washington, D.C., and Sacramento to the Bay Area that is augmented by some huge local supply lines. The pipes take a tortuous path, shooting off in all directions. There are a number of shut-off valves. There seems to be a lot of liquid flowing from the tap, yet there is always a thirst for more.

This plumbing analogy might be used to describe transportation finance in California and the Bay Area. With a seemingly endless array of funding categories, programs and associated acronyms, it is a complicated process that provides an essential service to many but is understood by only a few.

Another way to look at transportation funding is to view it as the means of implementing the goals embraced in the planning process. Dollars are invested in ways that bolster local, regional, state and federal objectives. When you get right down to it, while there are a variety of funding pots or sources, the funds themselves always fall into one of two categories: money for ongoing operations and maintenance of existing highways, streets, bikeways and transit services; and

money for new capital investments, such as new rail lines, buses, bike paths or a new highway lane.

The chart on page 13 illustrates transportation expenditures projected for the Bay Area over the next 20 years, assuming no increases in transportation revenues.

## Ongoing Operations and Maintenance

Roughly three-quarters of the funding that comes to the Bay Area is needed just to operate and maintain the existing transportation system. Buses need drivers and roads, bridges and transit systems require sizable investments for their upkeep. In this category fall such expenses as: filling potholes and resurfacing streets and roads; strengthening bridges and overpasses to withstand a major earthquake; buying fuel and paying drivers' and mechanics' salaries; providing special transit service for elderly and disabled persons who cannot use regular transit; and integrating new



# Projected Bay Area Transportation Revenues 1994–2013 (in Billions)



## State and Federal Revenues

\$18.9 billion (25%)

- 1 Federal/State Transportation Programs,  
Gas Taxes

## Local Revenues

\$55.3 billion (75%)

- 2 Transportation Development Act (TDA)  
1/4c sales tax \$7.0 billion
- 3 Other Local Funds:  
Gas Tax Subventions, Property Tax,  
General Funds, Transit Fares, Fees \$25.7 billion
- 4 Permanent 1/2c sales tax  
(five counties) \$11.5 billion
- 5 Fixed-term 1/2c sales tax  
(five counties) \$7.8 billion
- 6 Bridge Tolls \$3.3 billion

## Total Revenues

\$74.2 billion (100%)

technology to smooth traffic and alert travelers to road and transit conditions. (A sampling of these operations-oriented projects is included in “Keep It Moving!” on pages 18–19.)

To complicate matters, some of the money that comes to the region for transportation is targeted for building new transportation facilities and cannot be used for operations and maintenance. Thus, a community might have funding to build a new rail extension, but may lack the money to operate the new service once it is on line. And, at present, such operating funds are in short supply. The 1994 update to MTC’s *Regional Transportation Plan* identified a \$2 billion shortfall in funds needed for the upkeep of local streets and roads, and a \$1 billion gap in mass transit operating funds over 20 years.

## Capital Investments

Beyond maintenance and operations, about one-quarter of the funding that comes to the region is available for new transportation investments, referred to as “capital” projects in transportation circles. These capital improvements — be they rail extensions, new roads or new bus transfer stations — require years of public review, planning and design before any construction begins.

As with ongoing operation and maintenance of the existing system, there are many more ideas for improvements to the transportation network than there are funds available. This is not surprising when you consider the hefty price tag that some transportation projects carry. For



example, the Interstate 680/Highway 24 interchange in Walnut Creek is expected to cost in the neighborhood of \$350 million. Extending BART 12 miles from San Leandro to Dublin and Pleasanton will cost upwards of \$500 million. And the soundwalls springing up alongside freeways in the region are priced at approximately \$1 million per mile.

### Where does the funding come from?

Most transportation sources originate with taxpayers, who pay fuel, sales or other taxes and fees. As illustrated in the chart on page 12, in the Bay Area, the bulk of the monies are generated locally, with smaller portions coming from state and federal sources.

Listed on the chart across pages 14 and 15 are some of the major funding sources.

### How do transportation projects get funded?

Transportation funds are committed to projects, or “programmed,” in two ways:

#### Transportation Improvement Program

MTC prepares the federally required *Transportation Improvement Program*, or TIP, every two years with the cooperation of local governments, transit operators and Caltrans. The TIP is a comprehensive, multiyear transportation spending plan for the region. The 1995 TIP contains

## Projected Bay Area Transportation Expenditures 1994–2013 (in \$billions)

(Does not include private expenditures or seaport and airport operations)



#### Maintenance of Existing System \$56 billion (76%)

- 1 State Highway Maintenance \$4 billion
- 2 Repairing Local Streets and Roads \$9 billion
- 3 Toll Bridge Operations and Maintenance \$2 billion
- 4 Transit Capital Replacements (New Buses and Rail Cars) \$7 billion
- 5 Transit Operations \$34 billion

#### System Improvements \$18 billion (24%)

- 6 Highway, Transit and Street Improvements \$10 billion
- 7 Toll Bridge Improvements \$2 billion
- 8 Rail Extension Projects \$6 billion

#### Total Expenditures \$74 billion (100%)

# Major Transportation Funding Sources

(Listed by Annual \$ Amount)

Funding Category (Source)	Approximate Annual Amount for the Bay Area
Flexible Congestion Relief (state and federal fuel taxes)	\$250 million
Fixed-term ¼¢ sales taxes (local taxes, approved by voters in five Bay Area counties. Expire in 10-20 years)	\$207 million
Permanent ¼¢ sales taxes for transit (local source, approved by voters in five Bay Area counties)	\$207 million
State Highway Operation and Protection Program (state fuel tax)	\$160 million
Transportation Development Act (locally authorized; ¼¢ of state sales tax)	\$144 million
Federal Transit Act Section 9 (federal fuel tax, general fund)	\$116 million
Tolls from State-owned Bridges (collected from bridge users)	\$105 million
Federal Transit Act Section 3 - Fixed Guideway (federal fuel tax, general fund)	\$52 million
Federal Transit Act Section 3 - New Rail Starts (federal fuel tax, general fund)	Earmarked annually at the discretion of Congress; varies widely year to year.
Surface Transportation Program (federal fuel tax)	\$55 million
State Transit Assistance (certain state taxes on fuel)	\$40 million
Transportation Enhancement Activities (federal fuel tax)	\$35 million (Statewide)
Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement Program (federal fuel tax)	\$26 million

transportation projects worth more than \$13.5 billion. TIPs must “conform” to federal Clean Air Act requirements (meaning the projects, taken as a whole, must not worsen air quality). As the primary spending plan for the region, the TIP is one of the principal means of implementing the goals and priorities identified in the *Regional Transportation Plan*.

## State Transportation Improvement Program

To receive state funding, most projects (such as a new roadway or lane, a new rail line or an extension) must be included in the *State Transportation Improvement Program*, or STIP. Covering a seven-year span and updated every two years, the STIP determines if and when projects will be funded by the state. The STIP is approved by the

**Examples of Eligible Projects**

New highways, new transit lines; emphasis is on reducing traffic congestion.

Voter-approved projects, including transit and highways; varies by county.

Public transit operations (such as BART, SamTrans, Santa Clara County Transit).

Bridge and highway repairs, seismic retrofit, safety improvements.

Mass transit operations or new transit improvements, pedestrian/bicycle paths, transit for elderly and disabled persons, local streets (rural areas only).

Mass transit capital projects and operations.

Bridge operations/maintenance and improvements in the bridge corridor (ramps, message signs, road and transit improvements).

Rail vehicles, rail lines and other rail equipment.

New rail systems or extensions of existing rail lines.

Most capital projects eligible (highways, rail and bus transit, local streets, port facilities, bicycle and pedestrian projects, etc.)

Mass transit operations and transit improvements, special transit for elderly and disabled persons.

Scenic beautification, upgraded pedestrian or bicycle paths, historic rail depot upgrades, etc.

Projects to reduce vehicle emissions, vehicle-miles traveled or traffic congestion.

California Transportation Commission (CTC) — a statewide panel appointed by the governor. In the Bay Area, MTC prepares a *Regional Transportation Improvement Program*, or RTIP, which recommends projects in the nine Bay Area counties to the CTC for inclusion in the STIP.

MTC works closely with local jurisdictions in preparing the RTIP.


County-level congestion management agencies, or CMAs, set local priorities that feed into MTC’s regional process. The state Department of Transportation, or Caltrans, also makes recommendations to the CTC based upon statewide priorities. The CTC sorts out the requests from various regions and from Caltrans and commits state transportation funds to projects via the STIP.





# How a Project Gets Funded


## Typical Stages in the Development and Funding of Transportation Projects


*Symbol is used to indicate best public participation opportunities. (All the stages listed on this page, however, are open to comment by the public.) MTC encourages public participation in Bay Area transportation decision-making — especially during the earlier stages of the project development process, when citizen involvement is most effective.*

**1 Idea** – The process starts when a particular transportation need is identified or a new idea put forward. This first step can be taken by members of the public, a private business, a community group or a public agency. 

**2 Define Project** – The project idea must be adopted by a formal sponsor — usually a government entity — which refines the initial idea and develops clear project specifications. 

**3 Local Review** – In many cases, the project must first be presented for review to the local authorities, such as a municipal planning commission, local transit agency, city council, or county board of supervisors. Some projects can be approved at the local level (e.g., street repairs) and financed with local dollars. 

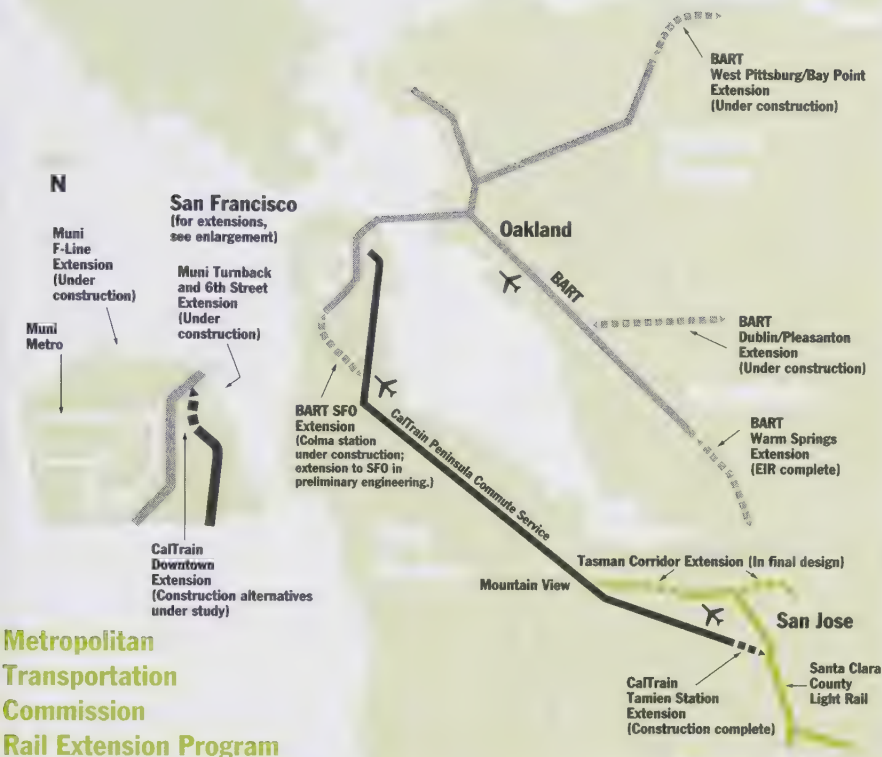
**4 County CMA Review** – To be eligible for certain state and federal funds, other (typically larger) projects must be cleared through the county-level congestion management agencies (CMAs). 

**5 MTC Program Review** – All projects competing for state and federal funds are reviewed by MTC as part of the preparation of the *Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)* and *Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*. At MTC, public participation is welcomed at committee-level and commission-level meetings, as well as at special public hearings. 

**6 State Program** – Projects reviewed and approved by MTC for eligibility for state funding are included in the *Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP)*, which is considered for inclusion in the *State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)*.

**7 Federal Program** – Projects of all types — bus, rail, highway, bicycle, etc. — reviewed and approved by MTC for eligibility for federal funds are included in the *Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*. The federal document, being the most comprehensive, also includes many of the projects listed in the state program.

**8 Grant Allocation (Funding)** – Projects listed in the multi-year state and federal programs are reviewed again by MTC on a project-by-project basis to assure state and federal requirements are met. Approved projects are forwarded to the state or federal authorities for the final award of funds.



**Metropolitan Transportation Commission Rail Extension Program**  
 Resolution No.1876  
 Adopted March 24, 1988 • Last revised February 26, 1992

## MTC's Regional Rail Agreement (Resolution 1876)

One outcome of MTC planning and financing programs is the Bay Area's rail extension program. This \$3.5 billion funding agreement calls for the extension of several rail lines in the San Francisco Bay Area: an extension of BART lines (including to San Francisco Airport, West Pittsburg/Bay Point, Dublin/Pleasanton and Warm Springs), an extension of the Santa Clara County light-rail system along the Tasman Corridor (west to Moun-

tain View and east through San Jose and Milpitas), an extension of the CalTrain commuter rail system into downtown San Francisco, as well as San Francisco Muni rail extensions.

First adopted by MTC in 1988 (MTC Resolution 1876), the rail extension agreement represents a regional consensus on investing limited rail transportation funding. Such a consensus is needed to garner federal and state funding to match locally raised revenues.

# Keep It Moving!

## Operating the Bay Area Transportation Network

Aside from planning and financing, MTC is working on a number of operational initiatives to make better use of the transportation system we have:

**Call Boxes** – The bright yellow call boxes along Bay Area freeways are there courtesy of the MTC Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (SAFE) and the California Highway Patrol (CHP). Some 2,500 roadside call boxes are in operation, providing motorists in need of mechanical assistance with a direct line to the CHP. The boxes contain specially designed cellular phones that operate using solar-powered batteries. The program is funded through an annual \$1 fee added to vehicle registrations. Some 150,000 calls for help are made annually from the call boxes.

**Freeway Service Patrol** – Sponsored by the MTC SAFE in partnership with Caltrans and the CHP, the Bay Area's Freeway Service Patrol is a fleet of roving tow trucks that are on the lookout for stalls and accidents during peak commute hours. By early 1995, some 50 tow trucks were patrolling more than 217 miles of the region's most congested freeways. FSP drivers stop more than 7,000 times a month, on average, to rescue stranded motorists, clear dangerous

road debris, tag abandoned vehicles and otherwise help make the Bay Area's freeways safer and less congested. Tow truck drivers can change flat tires, assist with minor mechanical repairs and provide a gallon of gas, all free of charge.

**Commuter Check™** – This program offers employers the opportunity to subsidize the commute costs of employees who ride transit. Under MTC's Commuter Check™ program, workers receive vouchers paid for by their employer that are good for tickets and passes on most Bay Area transit systems. The employer, in turn, qualifies for state and federal tax breaks.

**TransLink Universal Ticket** – MTC is leading an effort toward one "universal" ticket that will be good on all of the region's mass transit systems through a program called TransLink. Now





being tested on BART and County Connection buses in Contra Costa County, the program will later be extended to AC Transit, Golden Gate Transit, Livermore-Amador Valley “Wheels” buses and San Francisco Muni.

**Pavement Management System** – This system is a cooperative effort between MTC and more than 60 local jurisdictions to survey and evaluate options for improving the maintenance of local streets and roads. MTC provides computer software and technical assistance to help cities and counties extend the life of pavement and thus stretch local budgets further.

**Bay Area Advanced Traveler Information System, or TravInfo** – This program will provide Bay Area travelers with up-to-the-minute traveler information. The information may be accessed through a free local call or through commercial products and services. A regional network of sources, including roving FSP tow trucks and below-ground road sensors, will provide information on traffic conditions. Information for all transit systems in the Bay Area, including schedules, fares and delays, will also be available. The information will be used by organizations and private companies to provide new services to the public about road and transit travel options (for example, “real-time” traffic reports and new navigational systems to show the quickest route to a given destination).

**Regional Telephone Information System** – By early 1996, Bay Area callers will be able to dial one telephone number to get free information about any Bay Area transit service, ridesharing, bicycling, and real-time road and traffic conditions. The information number will be the same in each of the region’s four area codes.

**Regional Transit Guide** – MTC publishes a low-cost pocket guide to help Bay Area residents get around the region via public transit. Included is a “Destinations Points” listing of more than 1,000 popular travel destinations, from business parks to amusement parks, and botanical gardens to zoos. Included as well are comprehensive lists of airport shuttle services and special taxi and van services for senior and disabled riders. Also available is a free supplement printed in a larger typeface showing how to reach senior centers by regular public transit. (See the reply card at the back of this guide for information on ordering both the *Regional Transit Guide* and the supplement.)

**Bay Bridge Congestion Pricing Demonstration** – MTC, along with a broad-based group of business, environmental, public interest and government agencies, is exploring the feasibility of “congestion pricing” — charging higher tolls at peak commute hours than during off-peak times — on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. Revenues would be used for improved transit and ridesharing services as options to driving alone in this extremely congested travel corridor.

# Plugging Into The Process:

## MTC's Public Involvement Activities

Want to get involved in MTC's activities? The MTC Public Information Office (telephone 510.464.7787) has overall responsibility for keeping the public informed of and involved in the development of MTC plans and policies. Public information officers are available to answer questions from the public about MTC and provide information about participating in MTC citizen advisory committees. Following is some basic information on MTC operations:

### MTC Works Through Standing Committees

Matters on the Commission agenda usually come in the form of recommendations from MTC standing committees. Much of the nitty-gritty work of MTC is done at the committee level, thus the public is encouraged to participate at this stage. *MTC meetings are open to the public; to confirm dates, times and locations, call 510.464.7787.*

MTC standing committees are listed below:

**Administration and Oversight** – oversees the operation and management of the Commission staff, approves consultant contracts and sets agency financial policies (meets the second Wednesday of each month, at 10 a.m.).

**Grant Review and Allocations** – reviews transportation projects as they become ready for implementation for consistency with regional transportation priorities and air quality laws, then recommends to the full MTC board how various regional, state and federal funds should be allotted to specific projects around the region (meets the first Friday of each month, at 10 a.m.).

**Legislation and Public Affairs** – recommends MTC legislative policy, represents the Commission in the legislative process, and oversees the Commission's public information and citizen participation programs (meets the second Wednesday of each month, at 11 a.m.).

**Work Program** – recommends revisions to the *Regional Transportation Plan* — MTC's evolving 20-year blueprint for Bay Area transportation — recommends overall priorities for funding the regional transportation system, recommends programming of funds for projects in the *State Transportation Improvement Program* and the federal *Transportation Improvement Program*, reviews planning studies along specific travel corridors (meets the second Friday of each month, at 9:15 a.m.).



### **Citizen Advisory Committees Provide Important Feedback**

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To ensure that a broad spectrum of views is considered in developing transportation policy in the Bay Area, MTC has set up several citizen advisory committees, including:

**Elderly and Disabled** – Advises MTC regarding issues of concern to the elderly and to persons with disabilities, including access to transportation services and implementation of the Americans With Disabilities Act. This federal civil rights law requires, among other things, that public transit operators make their systems accessible to disabled persons.

**Minority Citizens** – Advises MTC to ensure that the views and needs of minority communities are adequately reflected in MTC policies. The Commission appoints members from the nine Bay Area counties covering the region's major ethnic minority groups.

**Freight** – Established by MTC in response to the new focus in 1991 federal transportation legislation on freight movement, MTC's Freight Advisory Council is made up of representatives of trucking, shipping, rail and air cargo interests. The group reviews MTC's plans and funding programs, and recommends ways to improve freight connections.

### **Public Information Services – Newsletters, Agendas and More!**

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Public Information staff (510.464.7787) can provide interested citizens with agendas, meeting notices and materials that accompany agenda items for meetings of the Commission and its committees and advisory panels. They also issue news releases on MTC programs and actions, and work with interested organizations to arrange for MTC staff and commissioners to make presentations in the community.

### **Monthly Meeting Schedule**

A tentative schedule of MTC meetings is published each month by MTC's Public Information Office. Interested citizens can receive copies of this meeting schedule, as well as specific meeting agendas (see the reply card at the back of this guide for further information).



## Newsletter and Annual Report

To keep the public informed of MTC's activities as well as about general transportation news for the Bay Area, MTC publishes a monthly newsletter, *Transactions*. Approximately 7,500 copies are circulated free of charge to interested citizens, the news media, public officials, legislators, transit staff, national transportation groups, environmental groups, business groups and libraries. One issue of the newsletter (generally in February) contains MTC's annual report, with information about MTC grants and expenses.

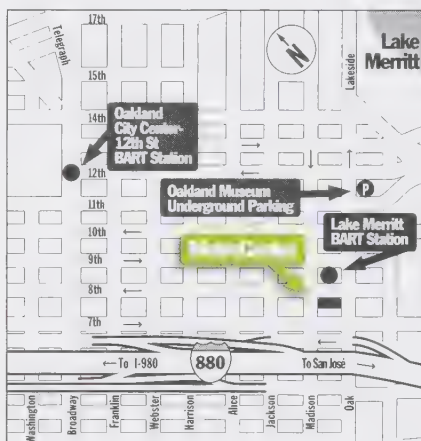
Upon request, MTC publications can be transferred to a format that is accessible to persons with disabilities, and are available for the visually impaired via Bay Talk on-line service (415.864.6430). (See the reply card at the back of this guide for information about getting MTC's *Transactions* newsletter.)

## Library Services — Information for the Asking

Want the latest word on transportation planning, demographics, economic indicators, public policy issues and regional issues? Chances are you can find what you need at the MTC/ABAG Library. MTC reports, brochures and studies are available to the public through the MTC/ABAG Library, located on the first floor of MTC offices. The public is welcome to use other periodicals and publications while on the premises.

## Visiting MTC Offices

MTC is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday (holidays excepted). Offices are housed in the Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter, located at Eighth and Oak streets in Oakland, and are easily accessible by public transit. The building is adjacent to the Lake Merritt BART station, and several AC Transit lines stop within a few blocks. The MetroCenter is also easily accessible via Interstate 880 or Interstate 980. Both street and garage parking are available nearby.



# Citizens' Guide to "Transportationese"

We've tried in this guide to spare readers as much jargon as possible. Inevitably in the transportation arena, however, confusing lingo will cloud communication. For that we apologize and hope that one day "transportationese" will be a forgotten dialect. Until that day, interested citizens can make use of the following glossary of acronyms and terms:

## **ABAG** *Association of Bay Area Governments:*

A voluntary association of counties and cities that is the land-use planning agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. Also provides demographic, financial, administrative, training and conference services to local governments and businesses. A member sits on MTC.

## **ADA** *Americans With Disabilities Act*

Federal civil rights legislation for disabled persons passed in 1990; calls on public transit systems to make their services more fully accessible, as well as to underwrite a parallel network of paratransit service.

**AVO** *Average Vehicle Occupancy:* The number of people traveling by private passenger vehicles divided by the number of vehicles used. The AVO during commute hours for the Bay Area in 1990 was 1.097.

**AVR** *Average Vehicle Ridership:* The ratio of all people traveling by any mode — including cars, buses, trains and bicycles (or telecommuting) — in a given area during a given time period to the number of cars on the road. A key measure of the efficiency and effectiveness of a transportation network; the higher the AVR, the better you're doing in terms of energy consumption and air pollution.

## **BAAQMD** *Bay Area Air Quality*

*Management District:* (Also known as the Air District, since the acronym seems to take longer to say than the full name.) Regulates industry and employers to keep air pollution in check and sponsors programs to clean the air. The Air District works with MTC and the Association of Bay Area Governments on issues that affect transportation, land use and air quality.

## **BCDC** *San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission:*

A state-established agency with jurisdiction over filling and dredging of San Francisco Bay and limited jurisdiction over development within 100 feet of the Bay; a representative sits on MTC.



**Blueprint Legislation:** A statewide funding package developed by the California Legislature in 1989 and approved by voters in 1990. The legislation, also known as Proposition 111, raised state gas and diesel taxes by 9 cents per gallon to pay for numerous transportation projects, and added requirements for county-level Congestion Management Programs. The Blueprint Legislation also included three \$1 billion bond measures for rail projects. Only one of the three rail bond measures won voter approval (Proposition 108, in 1990).

**CAA *Clean Air Act:*** Federal legislation that requires each state with areas that have not met federal air quality standards to prepare a State Implementation Plan, or SIP. The sweeping 1990 amendments to the CAA established new air quality requirements for the development of metropolitan transportation plans and programs. The California Clean Air Act (or CCAA) sets even tougher state goals.

**Caltrans *California Department of Transportation:*** The state agency that operates California's highway and intercity rail systems.

**Capital revenues:** Monies dedicated for new projects to cover one-time costs, such as construction of roads, transit lines and facilities or purchase of buses and rail cars.

**CHP *California Highway Patrol:*** State law enforcement agency responsible for highway safety, among other things.

**CMA *Congestion Management Agency:*** A countywide agency responsible for preparing and implementing a county's Congestion Management Program. CMAs came into existence as a result of state legislation and voters' approval of Prop. 111 in 1990. All nine Bay Area counties have them.

**CMAQ *Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program:*** A pot of federal money contained in ISTEA for projects and activities that reduce congestion and improve air quality in regions not yet attaining federal air quality standards.

**CMP *Congestion Management Program:*** Required of every county in California with a population of 50,000 or more (including all Bay Area counties) in order to qualify for certain state and federal funds, CMPs are prepared by Congestion Management Agencies (see entry under "CMA," above). CMPs, updated biennially, set performance standards for roads and public transit, and show how local jurisdictions will attempt to meet those standards.

**Conformity:** A process in which transportation plans and spending programs are reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with federal clean air requirements; transportation projects collectively must not worsen air quality.



**CTC** *California Transportation Commission*: A state-level version of MTC that sets state spending priorities for highways and transit and allocates funds. Its nine members are appointed by the governor.



**FCR** *Flexible Congestion Relief*.

A state-directed funding program that applies state and federal dollars to local and regional transportation projects that ease traffic congestion, whether highways, transit or other modes.

**Flexible funding**: Unlike funding that flows only to highways or only to transit by a rigid formula, this is money that can be invested on a range of transportation projects. Examples of flexible funding programs include the Surface Transportation Program, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement, and Flexible Congestion Relief.

**HOV Lane** *High-Occupancy-Vehicle Lane*: The technical term for a car-pool lane, commuter lane or diamond lane.

**Intermodal**: The term “mode” is used to refer to and to distinguish from each other the various forms of transportation, such as automobile, transit, ship, bicycle and walking. Intermodal refers specifically to the connections between modes.

**ISTEA** *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act*:

Pronounced “Ice Tea,” this landmark \$155 billion federal legislation signed into law in December 1991 calls for broad changes in the way transportation decisions are made. ISTEA emphasizes diversity and balance of modes, as well as the preservation of existing systems before construction of new facilities.

**MPO** *Metropolitan Planning*

*Organization*: A federally required planning body responsible for the transportation planning and project selection in its region; the governor designates an MPO in every urbanized area with a population of over 50,000 people. MTC is the Bay Area’s MPO.

**MTC** *Metropolitan Transportation*

*Commission*: The transportation planning, financing and coordinating agency for the nine counties that touch San Francisco Bay.

**Multimodal**: Refers to the availability of multiple transportation options, especially within a system or corridor. A

concept embraced in ISTEA, a multimodal approach to transportation planning focuses on the most efficient way of getting people or goods from place to place, be it by truck, train, bicycle, automobile, airplane, bus, boat, foot or even a computer modem.

**Operating revenues:** Monies used to fund general, day-to-day costs of running transportation systems. For transit, costs include fuel, salaries and replacement parts; for roads, operating costs involve maintaining pavement, filling potholes, paying workers' salaries, and so forth.

**NHS *National Highway System:*** An approximately 155,000-mile network called for in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act to provide an interconnected system of principal routes to serve major travel destinations and population centers. The NHS is expected to be designated by Congress in 1995.

**NTS *National Transportation System:*** Called for in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, the NTS to date is a proposal by the U.S. Transportation Secretary to integrate all aspects and modes of the transportation system into a single national system. The National Highway System is expected to be a subset of the larger, multimodal NTS.

**Program:** (1) *verb*, to assign funds to a project that has been approved by MTC, the state or other agency; (2) *noun*, a system of funding for implementing transportation projects or policies, such as through the *State Transportation Improvement Program* (see STIP).

**RTIP *Regional Transportation Improvement Program:*** A listing of highway and transit projects for which the region hopes to capture funds; compiled by MTC every two years from priority lists submitted by local jurisdictions.

**RTP *Regional Transportation Plan:*** A blueprint to guide the region's transportation development for a 20-year period. Updated every two years, it is based on projections of growth and travel demand coupled with financial projections. Required by state and federal law.

**RTPA *Regional Transportation Planning Agency:*** A state-designated agency responsible for preparing the *Regional Transportation Plan* and the *Regional Transportation Improvement Program*, administering state funds, and other tasks. MTC is the Bay Area's RTPA.

**SIP *State Implementation Plan:*** Here's a case where one term refers to two different — albeit related — documents. Metropolitan areas prepare regional SIPs showing steps they plan to take to meet federal air quality standards (outlined in the Clean Air

Act). Several SIPs make up the statewide plan for cleaning up the air, also known as a SIP.

**SOV** *Single-occupant vehicle:* A vehicle with one occupant, the driver, who is sometimes referred to as a “drive alone.”

**STIP** *State Transportation Improvement Program:* What the CTC ends up with after combining and whittling down various *Regional Transportation Improvement Programs*. Covering a seven-year span and updated every two years, the STIP determines when and if transportation projects will be funded by the state.

**STA** *State Transit Assistance:* Provides funding for mass transit operations and capital projects.

**STP** *Surface Transportation Program*  
One of the key funding programs in ISTEA. STP monies are “flexible,” meaning they can be spent on mass transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities as well as on roads and highways.

**TCM** *Transportation Control Measure*  
A strategy to reduce driving or smooth traffic flows in order to cut auto emissions and resulting air pollution. Required by the Clean Air Act, TCMs for the Bay Area are jointly developed by MTC and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. Examples of TCMs include roving tow truck patrols to clear stalls and accidents from congested roadways, new or increased transit service, or a program to promote car-pools and vanpools.



**TDA** *Transportation Development Act*  
State law enacted in 1971. TDA funds are generated from a tax of one-quarter of one percent on all retail sales in each county; used for transit, special transit for disabled persons, and bicycle and pedestrian purposes, they are collected by the state and allocated by MTC to fund transit operations and programs. In non-urban areas, TDA funds may be used for streets and roads under certain conditions.

**TDM** *Transportation Demand Management:* Low-cost ways to reduce demand by automobiles on the transportation system, such as programs to promote telecommuting, flextime and ridesharing.



### **TEA** *Transportation Enhancement*

*Activities:* An ISTEA-created funding category. Ten percent of STP monies must be set aside for projects that enhance the compatibility of transportation facilities with their surroundings. Examples of TEA projects include bicycle and pedestrian paths, restoration of rail depots or other historic transportation facilities, acquisition of scenic or open space lands next to travel corridors, and murals or other public art projects.

### **TIP** *Transportation Improvement*

*Program:* This is the primary spending plan for federal funding expected to flow to the region from all sources for transportation projects of all types. MTC prepares the three-volume TIP biennially with the assistance of local governments, transit operators and Caltrans. Depending upon the funding source, it covers a three- to seven-year period.

**TOS** *Traffic Operations System:* In the Bay Area, Caltrans and the CHP will monitor traffic flows by means of detectors embedded in pavement and closed-circuit television cameras, quickly dispatching tow trucks and other assistance. Message signs and broadcasts will alert drivers and transit riders to conditions ahead, while ramp metering will control traffic flows. All these devices together comprise the TOS.

**TransLink:** MTC's prototype for a universal ticket valid on all transit modes, from BART to buses to ferries. The magnetic-strip, stored-value ticket is being tested on BART and County Connection buses.

**U.S. DOT** *United States Department of Transportation:* The federal cabinet-level agency with responsibility for highways, mass transit, aviation and ports; headed by the secretary of transportation. The DOT includes the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration, among others. There are also state DOTs (known as Caltrans in California).

**VMT** *Vehicle Miles Traveled:* The more cars there are on the road at the same time in the same area, the worse congestion will be. This term helps pin down the numbers. Reducing VMT can help ease traffic congestion and improve air quality.



# Credits

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was produced by MTC's Legislation and Public Affairs department.

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# Notes



# Notes

# Notes

# Tell Us What You Think...

This guide is one element in a larger effort to foster greater public awareness of and involvement in the transportation decision-making process. Comments and suggestions for improving MTC's public involvement activities are always welcome. Call, fax or send your comments to:

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## We'll Tell You More!

If this guide has only whetted your appetite for transportation topics, check the appropriate boxes below and return this card by mail to MTC (phone and fax details are listed above) for further information. All are free unless indicated otherwise.

- ☐ Add my name to your *Transactions* newsletter mailing list.
- ☐ Add my name to the distribution list for agendas, minutes and monthly tentative schedules of MTC meetings.
- ☐ Send me the *Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP).
- ☐ Send me the *Regional Transit Guide* (include check payable to MTC for \$5.30 to cover the cost, which includes shipping and sales tax).
- ☐ Send me *Senior Centers of the Bay Area*, MTC's large-typeface guide on public transit access to these facilities.
- ☐ Loan me a copy of your video describing the 1994 RTP.
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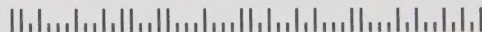
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